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Mary: It feels like home. I love the garage, washer and dryer and swimming pool. I have zero complaints and love life here!

Evelyn: I moved here to be closer to my daughter and granddaughter. I also started experiencing health problems and wanted to be close to services should I need them. My husband and four children are Aggies, so that also helped us make the decision! The people and staff are wonderful. It's very beautiful and comfortable.

Ross: I had friends who lived here. I love not having to do much cooking! I also love the people, entertainment and that life here is just easy.

Mima: It's gorgeous and was everything I was looking for in a home and more! I love the social aspect of living here. I enjoy water aerobics. My apartment has all of the appliances I had in my house. I also love the people – everyone is so friendly and enjoyable!

Janice: I loved the appearance and knew people who had moved in here. It's very nice and I was drawn to the social programs. I love the food and having someone cook for me every day. I love the social aspect of everyone dining together and enjoy living a stress-free life!

Barbara: I love the fact that optional meal plans were available as well as a garage, washer and dryer and space! I love the people. I also teach crafts, play 42, crochet, and visit a lot!

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On the Cover: The National Champion Texas A&M women's basketball team. Photos by Brian Davis '01 and Jason McConnell '01.

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Howdy!

I think it's safe to say that April 2011 will go down as one of the greatest months in Texas A&M sports history.

It all started with the women's basketball team in Indianapolis, making the program's first-ever Final Four appearance. Then, the Aggies went and shocked the sports world by defeating Stanford – the favorite – and Notre Dame – in their home state – to bring the national championship trophy home to Aggieland.

I was one of the lucky ones who got to see the Aggies win the title in person. Minutes before tip-off, the butterflies began swarming in my stomach and I felt like I could throw up all over the court at any moment. I think it was mostly nerves, but the feeling could have carried over from my unfortunate event on our journey to Indy (you can read more about that on page 35). I must have snapped more than 1500 photos during the game and celebration, hoping to capture every moment. It was a surreal experience that I will never forget.

Where were you when the Aggies won the national championship? Email editor@aggiemag.com and tell us your story. Or mail us a note to the address on the facing page. Read some of our "where were you" stories beginning on page 37.

The magical month of April culminated when Aggies all over the world tuned it to the 2011 NFL Draft to see Von Miller walk across the stage and begin his professional football career. Even though it wasn't much of a surprise to hear his name called with the second overall pick to the Denver Broncos, it sure was bittersweet. Called the No. 1 player on the board by many of the draft experts, Miller's amazing rise to become one of the greatest players in A&M football history is a remarkable story – one that many of us will undoubtedly be telling our grandchildren someday. Congratulations to Von and his family! It just goes to show that great things happen to great people.

Thanks for picking up this national championship commemorative issue of *Aggieland Illustrated*. It sure feels good to type that. I'm usually not a greedy person, but in this case, I'm making an exception. Let's bring some more championships to Aggieland!

Gig'em!

Blair '01

P.S. We are giving away two pair of tickets to the Aggies vs. Longhorns baseball game on May 19 at Olsen Field! To enter the drawing, send an email to contest@aggiemag.com by May 16 and tell us how many times Gary Blair is pictured in this issue. We will notify the two winners by email on May 17.

Congratulations to the winners of the first AI Bracket Challenge presented by MacResource Computers! First time you've heard about the contest? Follow us on Twitter @aggiemag or fan us on Facebook to keep up-to-date on all of our contests and ticket giveaways.

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ILLUSTRATED

EDITORIAL

Brian Davis '01

Publisher/Editor

brian@aggiemag.com

Jeremy Ksionda '04

Managing Editor

jeremy@aggiemag.com

Jason McConnell '01

Associate Editor/Photo Editor

jason@aggiemag.com

ADVERTISING

Rob Havens '88

Advertising Sales Manager

(979) 229-8046

rob@aggiemag.com

PRODUCTION/CIRCULATION

Kimberly Davis '01

kim@aggiemag.com

Sunnye Davis

sunnye@aggiemag.com

COPY EDITORS

Shawn Kruse '02

bowlerfox@aggiemag.com

Katie McConnell '09

katie@aggiemag.com

ASSISTANT TO THE MANAGING EDITOR

Stacey Ksionda '05

stacey@aggiemag.com

MARKETING/EDITORIAL INTERNS

Kelsey Keene '12

kelsey@aggiemag.com

Mindy Magee '12

mindy@aggiemag.com

Macy Savage '12

macy@aggiemag.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Lyssa Hamilton '99

lyssa@aggiemag.com

Gentry "Scoop" Woodard

scoop@aggiemag.com

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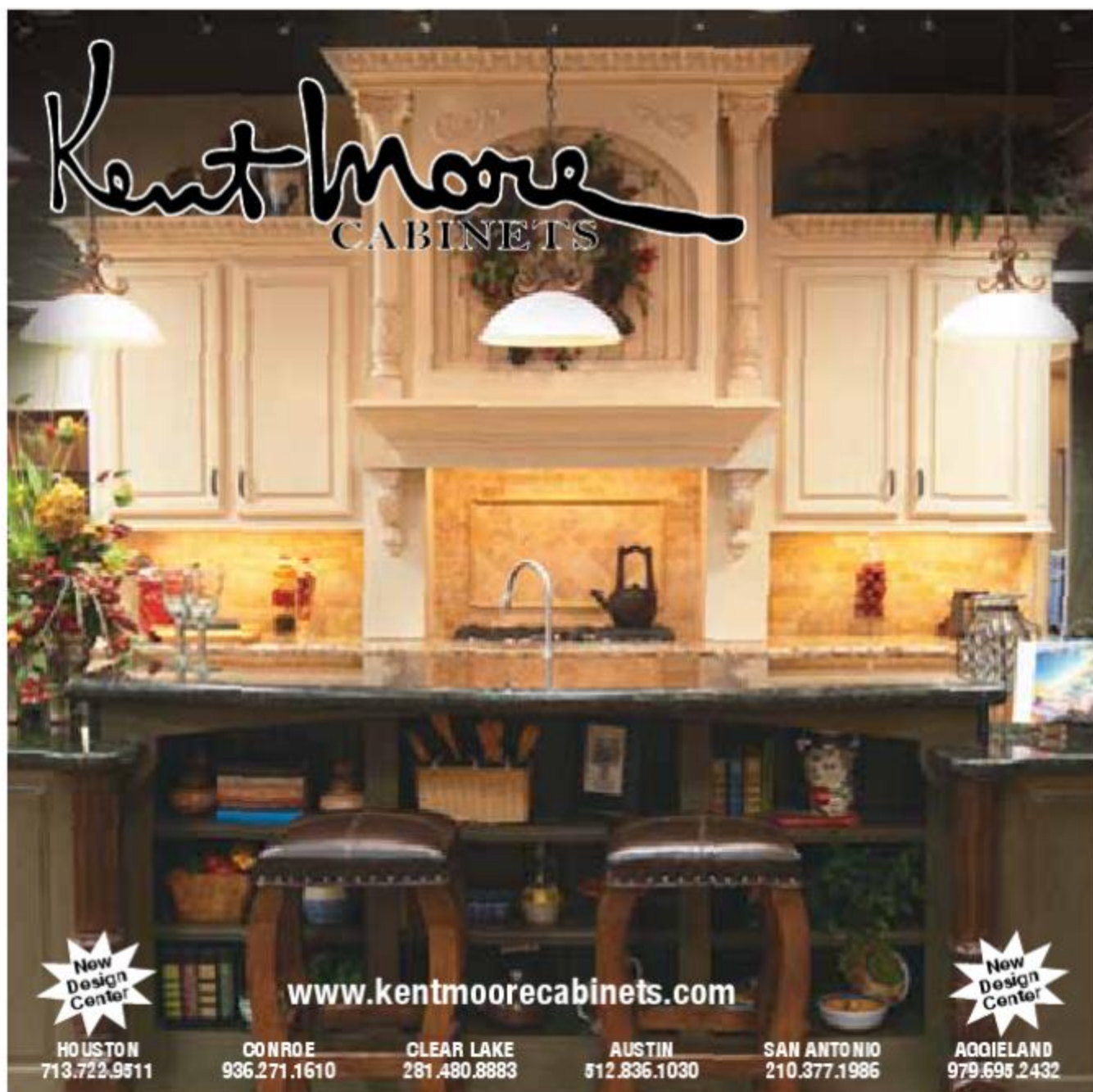
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tears of joy

Seniors Maryann Baker, Sydney Colson and Catherine Snow along with junior Tyra White, share a warm embrace and tears of joy with the A&M coaching staff moments before the final buzzer sounded in the national championship game. Photo by Brian Davis '01.





snapshot


SHOT CLOCK





we are the champions

The Texas A&M women's basketball team erupts in jubilation as the final buzzer sounds in the national championship game, signifying the Aggies' 76-70 victory over Notre Dame. With an unforgettable journey through the NCAA Tournament, Gary Blair and company claimed the program's first-ever national title. Photo by Brian Davis '01.



snapshot

making history

Junior Kelsey Assarian and senior Sydney Colson sing the Aggie War Hymn following Texas A&M's national championship victory. "It's time to make history," Colson said following the Aggies' thrilling upset over Stanford two days earlier. Indeed, the Aggies made history in Indy. Photo by Brian Davis '01.







gig'em broncos

When the Denver Broncos selected Texas A&M All-American Von Miller in the 2011 NFL Draft, they instantly added thousands of Aggies to their fanbase. Joined by his family on stage, Miller became the fourth Aggie to be selected with the No. 2 overall pick, which is the highest that an A&M player has ever been selected. Photo by Jason DeCrow, AP.

AHEAD OF THE CLASS

BY JEREMY KSIONDA '04

In our last issue, we took an extensive look at the 22 commitments that comprised the 2011 Texas A&M recruiting class. Yet, in the blink of an eye, the Ags are already more than halfway done with their 2012 signing day haul. And while the last class was regarded as very good, early returns indicate that the 2012 group could be one for the ages.

Here is a glimpse of the very early Aggie commitments, as well as a few names to keep an eye on in the coming months...



trevorKNIGHT (QB)
SA Reagan (San Antonio, TX)
6-2, 190

Chose the Aggies over TCU, LSU, Ok St, Texas Tech, Clemson and Baylor.

Arguably the top quarterback prospect in Texas, Knight chose the Aggies when the Longhorns (his family's longtime favorite) only offered him as an athlete. Their loss. Knight's got it all: intelligence, arm strength, accuracy and leadership. A tremendous pickup for the Aggies.



mattDAVIS (QB)
Klein Forest (Klein, TX)
6-2, 200

Chose the Aggies over Alabama, Auburn, LSU, Arkansas and Nebraska.

The only thing better than securing one of Texas' top two QB recruits? How about landing both of them? Davis' personal relationship with Mike Sherman put the Aggies over the top in landing his commitment. Getting Davis and Knight is an unbelievable feat by the Ags.



troyGREEN (RB)
Brenham (Brenham, TX)
6-1, 185

Chose the Aggies over TCU and Baylor.

The Ags went "all-in" in Brenham, offering four prospects from the talent rich program in their backyard. Green accepted A&M's offer, and the Ags picked up an outstanding, versatile player in the process. Green was the Cubs' featured back last season and spent time at linebacker as a sophomore. He could play either at A&M.



treyWILLIAMS (RB)
Dekaney (Spring, TX)
5-8, 175

Chose the Aggies over Auburn, Alabama, LSU, TCU, Arkansas and Miami.

How would we best describe Williams? Lightning in a bottle. A big play waiting to happen. The next Barry Sanders. His offer list speaks for itself, and his selection to the Army All-American Bowl in January is icing on the cake. Williams and his good friend Matt Davis committed to the Aggies at this year's spring game, and left a smile a mile wide on Mike Sherman's face.



trentMOMON (WR)
Hempstead (Hempstead, TX)
6-5, 190

Chose the Aggies over Houston, OU, Texas Tech and Baylor.

The local wideout was discovered by the Aggies after being somewhat of an unknown commodity. Unlike most big receivers, he's not a "one-trick pony," in that Momon really shows tenacity on the defensive side of the ball. A relatively raw prospect, he has a tremendous ceiling.



jaevonRICHARDSON (WR)
Baytown Lee (Baytown, TX)
6-1, 170

Chose the Aggies over Baylor, TCU and Houston.

Richardson has been a longtime target of Mike Sherman, and truth be told, he could have been easily classified as an A&M commit for quite some time. Still, Richardson made it official this spring and gave the Ags a polished wide receiver prospect with a ton of potential.



adrianBELLARD (OL)
Brenham (Brenham, TX)
6-5, 300

Chose the Aggies over Baylor.

With so many highly touted prospects coming out of Brenham, coupled with the fact that he plays offensive line, Bellard hasn't received many headlines. Watch him on film, however, and you'll find as much of a "can't miss" prospect there ever was. Big, agile and strong, the Aggies will certainly have to fend off a slew of suitors to hold on to his signature.



mikeMATTHEWS (OL)
Elkins (Missouri City, TX)
6-3, 260

Chose the Aggies over USC, LSU, Arizona and Texas Tech.

Son of NFL Hall of Famer Bruce Matthews. Brother of Aggies Jake and Kevin Matthews. Cousin of Green Bay Packers LB Clay Matthews. What more is there to say? Other than to make sure everyone knows that Mike is an outstanding player on his own merit, of course. But really, that shouldn't have to be said.



kimoTIPOTI (OL)
Hurst L.D. Bell (Dallas, TX)
6-5, 290

Chose the Aggies over Houston, OU and Purdue.

The Ags could take a Kimo Tipoti in every class. Big, strong, tenacious and surprisingly swift on his feet, Tipoti can hold his own against anyone in the state.



michaelWILSON (OL)
Aledo (Aledo, TX)
6-6, 255

Chose the Aggies over Texas Tech, Kansas and Ok St.

A long, rangy tackle, Wilson has already got a state championship under his belt at Aledo High School, and will undoubtedly make a run at a repeat performance as a senior. With great feet and solid technique, Wilson is a very good pickup for the Aggies.



loganDAVID (DT)
Blinn JC (Brenham, TX)
6-3, 300

Chose the Aggies over Texas Tech.

Originally from nearby Rockdale High School, David signed with Blinn Junior College in Brenham out of high school. Originally a Texas Tech commitment, David switched his pledge to the Aggies for the opportunity to play close to home and alongside his Juco teammate and 2011 signee LaMarc Strahan.



ericDAVIS (DE)
John Tyler (Tyler, TX)
6-3, 225

Chose the Aggies over Ok St, TCU and Texas Tech.

With Davis, the Aggies picked up what looks to be their biggest catch out of East Texas in nearly half a decade. Long, athletic and explosive off the edge, the Ags will have to hold off some of the region's best in order to hold onto the John Tyler standout. Davis is widely considered a top-30 prospect in Texas.



tyroneTAYLOR (DE)
Galena Park (Galena Park, TX)
6-3, 210

Chose the Aggies over Houston.

Taylor was one of the first commitments of the 2012 class, as he pledged to play for the Aggies when his brother Tyrell committed and signed with the class of 2011. The Taylor brothers will be true "blitz brothers" for the Ags, as both prospects possess an incredible burst and have a knack for finding the backfield.



alonzo WILLIAMS (DE)
Abbeville (LA) (Abbeville, LA)
6-4, 250

Chose the Aggies over Georgia, Tennessee and Illinois.

The Ags continue their run of good fortune in the Pelican State with early evaluations and heavy pursuit of top-flight prospects. Williams has as much upside as anyone in the state of Texas at his position. The versatile athlete could even play tight end at the next level.



michael RICHARDSON (LB)
DeSoto (DeSoto, TX)
6-2, 230

Chose the Aggies over Baylor, Ok St, Tennessee and Texas Tech.

Richardson came to an A&M camp last summer and immediately caught everyone's attention. Only a junior at the time, Richardson looked the part of a third-year sophomore in college. His combination of measurements, talent and the fact that he's from the DeSoto pipeline, made Richardson to A&M an absolute slam dunk.



jordan RICHMOND (LB)
Denton Ryan (Denton, TX)
6-1, 220

Chose the Aggies over Ok St, OU, Arizona, Arkansas and Stanford.

Arguably the state's top inside LB prospect, the Ags zeroed in on Richmond long ago and made him one of the top priorities. Watching him on film, it's easy to see why. With his size, speed, nose for the ball and ability to cover sideline to sideline, Richmond is an outstanding talent.



corey THOMPSON (DB)
Elkins (Missouri City, TX)
6-2, 185

Chose the Aggies over Arkansas and Texas.

An astounding physical specimen, a top-flight safety and an Aggie legacy made Corey Thompson another top priority in 2012. Hailing from the same high school as the Matthews brothers, Thompson is exactly the type of fast, physical prospect that the Ags covet in the secondary.



darion MONROE (ATH)
East St. John (LA) (Reserve, LA)
5-11, 175

Chose the Aggies over LSU, Ole Miss and Tulsa.

The infamous Floyd Raven saga of 2011 continues to benefit A&M's recruiting efforts. Monroe, a high school teammate of Raven, plans to re-join his good friend in College Station, as both Louisiana standouts project as cornerbacks for the Aggies. Without question, Monroe would be ranked among the top 25 players in Texas.

Who will be next to commit? Keep an eye on Crowley Louisiana's Denzel Duvall (LB), Fort Bend Hightower's Bralon Addison (WR/DB), Van's Dalton Santos (LB), Waco La Vega's Michael Starts (DL), San Antonio Brandel's Collin Blake (CB) and Port Arthur Memorial's Trey Singleton (CB). **A**

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(men's tennis) Led by senior All-American Austin Krajicek (above), the Aggie men's tennis team finished second in the Big 12 regular season with a 5-1 record (24-5 overall). The A&M career leader in doubles victories, Krajicek recently earned an unprecedented three straight Big 12 Player of the Week honors. **(men's basketball)** The Texas A&M men's basketball team reached the 24-win mark for the fifth straight year – only the seventh 24-win season in the program's 99-year history – and made its sixth straight appearance in the NCAA Tournament. Unfortunately, the No. 7 seed Aggies were eliminated by Florida State (the No. 10 seed) in the first round. **(women's tennis)** The 30th-ranked women's tennis team finished the regular season with a 14-7 overall record (7-4 in Big 12) and clinched the No. 4 seed at the conference tournament. One of three seniors on the team, Morgan Frank (below) became the first player in Big 12 history to capture four women's tennis individual singles titles. **(baseball)** Behind one of the best pitching rotations in the country, the No. 6 Aggie baseball team has an excellent opportunity to claim another Big 12 title and a coveted top eight national seed for the NCAA Tournament. At the plate, Bryan native Krey Bratsen is tearing up Big 12 pitching during his rookie campaign, earning multiple conference Newcomer of the Week honors along the way. **(softball)** The No. 21 Aggie softball team was dealt a big blow midseason when All-Big 12 catcher Meagan May suffered a broken finger and missed several key games. Despite a few struggles during Big 12 play, the Aggies can still finish as high as third in the conference and make some noise in the postseason. **(track & field)** The Aggie men claimed second and the women finished fifth in team scoring at the NCAA Indoor Championships on the Texas A&M campus in March. Jessica Beard (below) became the first Aggie female to claim an individual title at the indoor championships, while Demetrius Pinder (below) earned A&M's first indoor title in the men's 400.





missAGGIE

Texas A&M senior Brooke Coleman's passion for horseback riding has led her down a remarkable road

BY KELSEY KEENE '12

Deciding to move 2,000 miles away from home is pretty substantial regardless of the circumstances. Deciding to move 2,000 miles away from home and your family when you are only 13 years old is life-altering. However, that's precisely the choice that senior Brooke Coleman made to fulfill her dreams in the equestrian world.

Coleman sat on a horse for the first time at her family's ranch when she was just three years old. When she was six, her mother introduced her to English riding. She got her first pony, "Peeka-boo," when she was seven.

"She liked to go very fast, which didn't exactly make her an ideal learning pony," Coleman recalled.

Coleman immediately realized her passion for English style riding and began to take lessons at a nearby barn. She also began to compete.

While competing in Virginia, Coleman met a girl who trained and competed on the East Coast. The girl shared her training and show experiences and introduced Coleman to her trainer. Coleman knew that was what she wanted to do and was where she needed to be to reach her full potential.

"I wanted to be the best, so I needed to compete against the best," Coleman said.

With support from her parents, Coleman made the decision to move to Cape Cod, Massachusetts when she was 13 and began training.

She spent the next several years traveling on the show circuit. From January through April, she competed in Florida. During those four months, she would also complete a full year of school through the University of Nebraska Independent Study Program. Over the summer, Coleman continued to compete in cities throughout the northeast. In August it was back to the Cape to train for finals, which were in the fall.

The circuit continued in Washington D.C., New Jersey and Pennsylvania as well as areas of New England, all leading up to the Maclay Finals in Syracuse, New York – the national championship for equestrian. Winning the Maclay Regionals in 2006 is one of her biggest accomplishments.

The Aggie equestrian coaches were well aware of Coleman's success and began recruiting her while she was in Florida. At first she was hesitant – not sure

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if she wanted to go to college at all. She ultimately decided to visit the campus and was immediately impressed by the spirit, tradition and people in Aggieland. Although the format of competition was much different then what she was used to, she decided the school was a good fit for her.

"I looked at it as a new challenge," Coleman said. "It's a lot of fun and a really hard challenge."

One of the biggest changes was taking an individual sport and making it a team sport.

"If I go in and I lose my round it's not game over," she said. "That's the beauty of having teammates. It's a great experience that anyone would be lucky to have."

In February, Coleman represented Texas A&M at the second annual Winter Equestrian Festival (WEF) Collegiate Equitation Challenge in south Florida. On the plane ride east, Coleman's ears began to clog. By the time the plane landed, she was in pain and barely able to hear. After taking in a few practice rounds, Coleman went to the doctor and discovered that her ear drums had expanded and she had bronchitis. She was in pain, but not discouraged.

"When I ride I don't pay attention to pain or anything I am feeling," she admitted.

Coleman rode through the pain all the way to the WEF championship. In the finals, she downed defending champion Maggie McAlary of Auburn to bring the title home to Aggieland.

"It was neat to be able to do that for my team," Coleman said. "I don't look at it as 'I won,' I look at it as 'Texas A&M won.'"

Horse riding has been the focal point of much of Coleman's life and it has helped her overcome several adversities along the way. Before she moved away from home, she was constantly picked on by other kids in school.

"I had to change middle schools because of it," she admitted. "It was a part of the reason why I decided to move away. I already had no confidence or self-esteem and knew things would only get worse in high school."


Bullying had a huge impact on her childhood and she wants to use that experience in the future to help kids like her who go through the same things.

"It has not been an easy ride to the top," she admits. "It's been a very difficult one. Moving away and developing myself through horses made me a much stronger and more confident person."

When she's finished at A&M, Coleman has an opportunity waiting on her to become a professional rider. However, right now, she doesn't think she's going to take it. She wants riding to become more of a hobby, and less of an occupation.

After graduation, Coleman plans to spend the summer in Houston and then make another life-altering move. This time, she is headed west to Hollywood to pursue her dreams in the entertainment industry.

"My ultimate dream is to ride a horse in a movie," she said. "In full medieval dress galloping through a forest or maybe even stunt riding."

Her favorite horse movie – *Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken*. 

"My brother, Brad, also left home at a young age to train to become a race car driver and now drives for the Joe Gibbs Racing team in the NASCAR series. We both have horsepower in a sense. He has a lot more than me though."

— BROOKE COLEMAN



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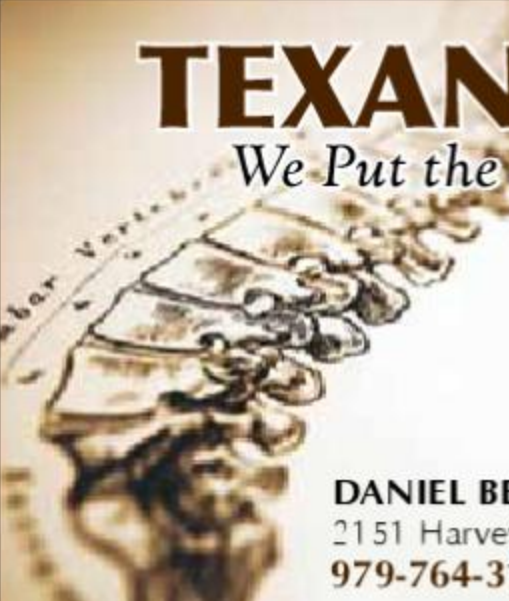
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THE



RIGHT FIT

From California to Arizona to Aggieland, junior Lindsey Sisk has finally found her home on the A&M softball team

BY KELSEY KEENE '12

The road has been long, and she has made a few stops along the way, but Lindsey Sisk has finally found her home in Aggieland. Following a transfer from the University of Arizona and an injury-plagued 2010 season, things are looking up for the junior softball player.

Born and raised in Murietta, California, Sisk began her softball career when she was ten years old. At the time she was riding horses competitively and had no intentions of playing. In fact, when her father told her he had signed her up to play softball she began to cry.

"Turns out I happened to love it, so I am thankful for that," Sisk said.

Pitching soon became a skill that Sisk wanted to focus on, so she and her father began practicing two or three times a week in their backyard. Practicing paid off, and she began to pitch in games. Once Sisk was serious about pitching, she began consistently going to a pitching coach – one of her father's friends.

"He told me that if I wanted to be good I would have to work hard and, eventually, my workouts went to five or six times a week," Sisk said.

During her freshman year of high school, Sisk received her first recruitment letter from the University of Florida. The letters continued to arrive throughout her sophomore and junior years from schools in the Big 12, SEC and Pac 10 including the University of Arizona – one of the premier programs in the nation.

"I always wanted to go to Arizona," Sisk admitted. "When I was little, it was my dream school."

Her official visit to Arizona was the deciding factor. Sisk felt that the school was a good fit for her.

Sisk posted a 10-3 record on the mound during her freshman year at Arizona. As a sophomore, she finished 13-5, striking out 86 batters in 107 innings.

Although she had two successful years there, Sisk felt like Arizona wasn't the right place for her after all. After discuss-

ing the possibility of transferring with her father and former coaches, Sisk decided that looking at other schools was what she needed to do.

Once she was granted a released from Arizona, Sisk began looking at the University of Florida, Northwestern, Baylor and Texas A&M. She narrowed down her choices to the Florida and A&M.

While playing for Arizona, Sisk had the chance to come to College Station and play against the Aggies.

"I got to see the school and the Sugar Daddies screaming and yelling," she recalled.

The atmosphere was one reason for her decision to transfer to A&M. Another was the Aggies' head coach, Jo Evans.

"She is very honest with me and is your biggest fan all of the time," Sisk said. "She really sets the tone and makes players want to come here and play for her."

Upon arriving in Aggieland, Sisk immediately felt like part of the family. From the first day that she walked on the field and met the rest of the girls, she felt like a part of the team.

"The girls are amazing and we all get along great and have great chemistry," she said.

One week before the season started, Sisk was more than ready to play. Then the unthinkable happened. On Super Bowl Sunday she was cutting an avocado to make guacamole when the knife slipped, cutting the tendon connected to her middle finger. Instead of taking the field as an Aggie for the first time, Sisk needed surgery that would sideline her from four to six weeks. She spent her time in rehab, doing homework and watching the team practice.

Finally, the time came for Sisk to get back on the field. Then, one day while Sisk was practicing, the previously injured tendon detached again.

"I didn't feel it at all," Sisk recalled. "But I went to therapy and I couldn't bend it."

The injury required surgery and six more weeks in a splint. When the time finally came for her to be released, Sisk was ready to finally get on the field. As luck would have it, right after she got back on the field, Sisk was caught in a run-down in practice, fell, and tore her ACL.

"She hadn't tagged me yet, I went down before she tagged me, or I would have been out," Sisk said.

As the saying goes, three strikes and you're out. After tearing her ACL, Sisk was forced to redshirt in the 2010 season.

"It was devastating," she admitted. "I was really upset about it. But, I knew the team would be just fine and I still had two more years to play."

Now, things are finally coming together for Sisk. She has recovered completely from each injury and has teamed with sophomore Mel Dumezich to give the Aggies a tandem of aces on the mound.

"Pitching is coming along, and I'm really happy with what I am seeing right now," Sisk said.

She recalls her first time to finally get to play in maroon and white with a smile. The experience was long-awaited and very exciting.

"I have a passion for the game," Sisk said. "It's nice to play again." **AI**





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NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

The Aggies' incredible journey to the top of the women's college basketball world

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01



SHREVEPORT, LA

1ST ROUND (MARCH 20): TEXAS A&M 87, MCNEESE STATE 47

Making its first NCAA tournament appearance, McNeese State struggled mightily against a far superior Texas A&M team. The Cowgirls hit only one of their first 21 shots and turned the ball over six times in that span. Meanwhile, the Aggies scored 28 of their first 30 points in the paint en route to a 30-6 lead. All-American Danielle Adams led the way with 18 points and the Aggies rolled to an 87-47 victory. Kelsey Assarian and Tyra White each added 12 points, while Adrienne Pratcher orchestrated the offense for much of the game because Sydney Colson got into foul trouble and later took a blow to the head. The victory marked the fifth straight year the Aggies have gotten through the first round.

2ND ROUND (MARCH 22): TEXAS A&M 70, RUTGERS 48

While an easy first round victory was expected, this match-up created a little more cause for concern. After all, the Aggies were in a similar situation in 2010 when they were upset in a rematch with Gonzaga in the second round. However, the Aggies used that as motivation against Rutgers in a 70-48 rout. Both teams said they expected a far more competitive rematch compared to the 29-point blowout by A&M in December. Instead, the Scarlet Knights turned the ball over 20 times and were held to 35.8 percent shooting. Danielle Adams dominated from inside and out, scoring 28 points and 11 rebounds – the highest point total by an A&M player in an NCAA tournament game. **A**



Aggieland ROAD TRIP

COLLEGE STATION > CHICAGO > SHREVEPORT
2,270 miles, 38 hours, 6 states

After dissecting the costs of flights versus gas prices, Jason McConnell '01 and I jumped in the car for an unforgettable journey across the country to follow the Aggie basketball teams in the opening rounds of the men's and women's NCAA Tournaments. Here are some of the highlights from our adventure, which I'll admit are mostly about the food we ate...

DOWN HOME WITH THE NEELYS

You would be foolish to drive through Memphis at lunchtime and not stop for some BBQ. Without hesitation, Jason knew exactly where we needed to stop – Neely's Bar-B-Que in west Memphis. The small restaurant, famous for creating the Food Network show *Down Home with the Neelys*, wasn't much to look at from the outside, but the Memphis-style pulled pork was very tasty. Jason sweet-talked the waitress into giving us a couple of ribs to try and I had a side of BBQ spaghetti for the first time. Surprisingly, it was like spaghetti with a mixture of tomato and BBQ sauces mixed in.



THE PERFECT SANDWICH

After 18 hours of driving we finally made it to Chicago. Exhausted and starving, our first stop was at Portillo's Hot Dogs. Jason had been telling me about Portillo's and their Italian beef sandwiches ever since he visited Chicago last summer. "Get the combo sandwich, dipped," he recommended. Italian beef, char-grilled sausage and peppers (spicy or sweet) on a french bread hoagie. And "dipped" means the whole sandwich is submerged in the gravy that the meat is cooked in before it's served. Yes, it was messy and yes, it was delicious.



RIDING THE 'L'

One of my favorite things about visiting major metropolitan cities is experiencing their methods of public transportation. It always seems to be an adventure and is usually a great place to see interesting locals. The highlight of riding the 'L' was being serenaded by a performer looking for donations on one of our longer rides.



CHICAGO STYLE

We knew a trip to Chicago wouldn't be complete without eating some pizza, so finding a Gino's East was on our must-do list. After some morning sightseeing, we decided there was just enough time to stuff ourselves with a Chicago deep dish before heading to the United Center. Unfortunately Jason made his first mistake of the trip – trusting me to navigate us as we walked the streets of Chicago. In my defense, there is a Gino's East at Jackson Blvd. and Jefferson St. according to Google maps on my iPhone. Well, there's not one there – trust me – and there's not one close, either. So we decided to postpone Gino's until after the game. We did ultimately find one after the game and it was excellent. And it was the first time Jason and I have ever eaten somewhere and both left uneaten food on the table.



THE HOUSE THAT JORDAN BUILT

Even though the outcome was disappointing, watching the Aggies play in the United Center was a special treat for me. I grew rooting for the Bulls during their dynasty and Michael Jordan is my favorite pro athlete of all time. I regret never getting to see Jordan play in person, so even though the Aggies were outscored, it was memorable to see the venue where he once dominated on the court.



THE FRIENDLY CONFINES

As a lifelong Astros fan, I haven't really enjoyed pro baseball for the past

few years, but seeing Wrigley Field in person was always on my bucket list. I still want to see a game there some day, but this experience will suffice for now. I'll have to plan my next trip to the "Windy City" during baseball season.



AI GOES TO WHITE CASTLE – FOR BREAKFAST

Jason grew up in Kentucky where they have White Castles on every corner, so needless to say, he had to get his fix in while we were in the right region. Unfortunately, our time in Chicago ended up being shorter than we had hoped no thanks to the Florida St. basketball team, so our only opportunity to have White Castle was for breakfast on the way out of town. That didn't stop Jason from getting his fix while I experienced my first White Castle sliders.



DETOUR TO AMISH COUNTRY

On the LONG road back from Chicago, our curiosity got the best of us as we continued to see signs for an Amish community in Arthur, IL. It was getting close to noon, so Jason did a quick google search for dining options in Arthur. When he scrolled to "Yoder's Kitchen" on the list, we both knew right away where we were having lunch. Sure, we had seen the Amish in movies, but it was a surreal experience to watch them traveling



the streets by horse-drawn carriage, using horses to plow a field and the many clothes hung out to dry at each home. Oh and our food was good, too. It's hard to go wrong with lots of butter, flour and milk. Plus, we figured the chicken was pretty fresh. As a chicken noodle soup fan, I enjoyed their specialty noodles and mashed potatoes.

BUTTERMILK RANCH

Anyone who knows me can tell you that I have a weakness for ranch dressing. Not just any ranch dressing, but the good, homemade stuff. If I could get it into my body through an IV and survive, I would do it. One of my all-time favorite ranch dressings is a buttermilk concoction at The Faded Rose in Little Rock, AR served with some giant steak fries. Even though it was nearly 10 p.m. when we drove back through "The Rock," Jason and I made the stop so that I could get my ranch fix. Order the large steak fries appetizer with a side of buttermilk – you won't be disappointed.



CAJUN FEAST

When searching for some Louisiana Creole cuisine for lunch in Shreveport, Jason discovered an establishment called Brother's Seafood that was a little off the beaten path, but had great reviews. After pulling into the parking lot, we seriously considered stopping, turning around and quickly exiting. However, we decided to live dangerously and go inside. When we walked in, we noticed there were only two occupied tables and I began to further doubt Jason's selection. Then, as our eyes began to focus on



one of the tables, we noticed one of the patrons was none other than Bill Byrne, Texas A&M's athletic director. After a brief exchange of pleasantries, Byrne, as if he was a regular, assured us that the cuisine was superb. The waitress recommended we start with a bowl of their famous gumbo. It was tasty, but I don't want to know what was in it. I always say, if you can't identify a creature by its skeleton, then you're better off not knowing what it was. For the main course, we feasted on a platter of fried catfish, fried and stuffed shrimp, fried oysters, french fries and rice with gravy. We were both stuffed, but knowing that it was our first visit, the waitress graciously brought us some of their homemade apple pie, on the house. Needless to say, the next time we're in Shreveport, another visit to Brother's will be on the menu. **AI**





DALLAS, TX

SWEET SIXTEEN (MARCH 27): TEXAS A&M 79, GEORGIA 38

Going into the Georgia game, it must have been difficult for the Aggies to avoid thinking about the potential rematch against Baylor that was looming in the next round. Everyone outside the locker room was certainly talking about it. However, just 10 minutes into the game, it was the Bulldogs who looked unprepared and absolutely outmatched as the Aggies raced to a 27-2 lead. Danielle Adams turned in another phenomenal performance on both ends of the floor, scoring 23 points and grabbing a career-high 14 rebounds. Tyra White added 14 and Sydney Colson contributed 11 points as Texas A&M routed Georgia, 79-38. The 41-point victory was the most lopsided NCAA tournament win in school history.

ELITE EIGHT (MARCH 29): TEXAS A&M 58, BAYLOR 46

The match-up everyone was waiting for finally arrived and it certainly did not disappoint. In an intense atmosphere at the American Airlines Center, the Aggies finally beat Baylor, 58-46, earning a trip to the Final Four for the first time in school history. Texas A&M had lost eight straight games against the Lady Bears, including the previous three this season, but when it mattered most, the Aggies led from start to finish behind a 22-point performance by Sydney Carter and several clutch plays by Sydney Colson. Baylor's Brittney Griner struggled mightily, shooting 6 of 18 from the field, including a missed dunk attempt, and 8 of 15 from the free throw line. Tyra White had 10 points and Adaora Elonu added eight points and 10 rebounds. **AT**





COLLEGE STATION > DALLAS
366 miles, 6 hours, 1 state

The Aggies are playing just three hours up the road with a chance to advance to the Final Four? This road trip was a no-brainer. Jason and I jumped back in the car to head to the American Airlines Center in Dallas. While it was another unforgettable journey, there was really just one highlight from this short road trip...

THE AGGIES RISE TO THE OCCASION

I've lost count on how many times Jason and I have gone to an Aggie sporting event outside of College Station only to have to endure a long drive home in disappointment afterwards, wondering what could have been. On the trip to Dallas, I wanted to believe that this team had it in them to reverse that fortune, but I just had this bad feeling in the pit of my stomach that the Aggies would come close, but come up short yet again. Well, I suppose it must have been gas because once Danielle Adams and Brittney Griner reached for the opening tip, it was clear this Aggie team was not going to lose to Baylor this time. Not on this night. Not this team. It was an usually short drive home that night. **AI**

JASON MCCONNELL '01

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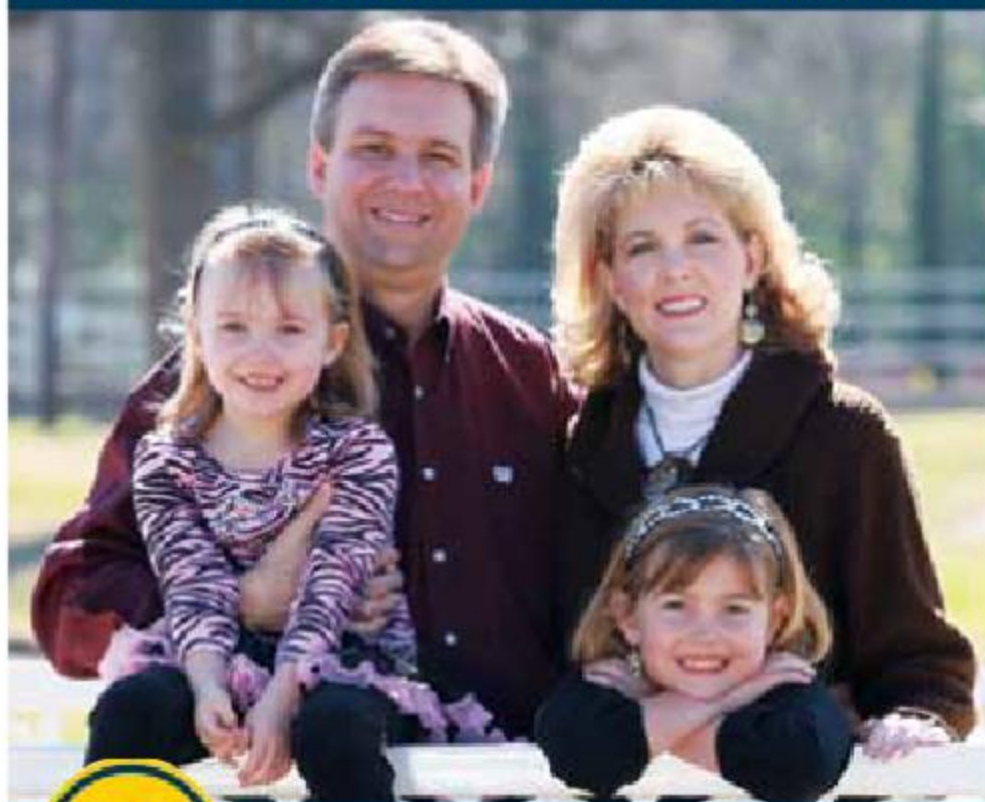
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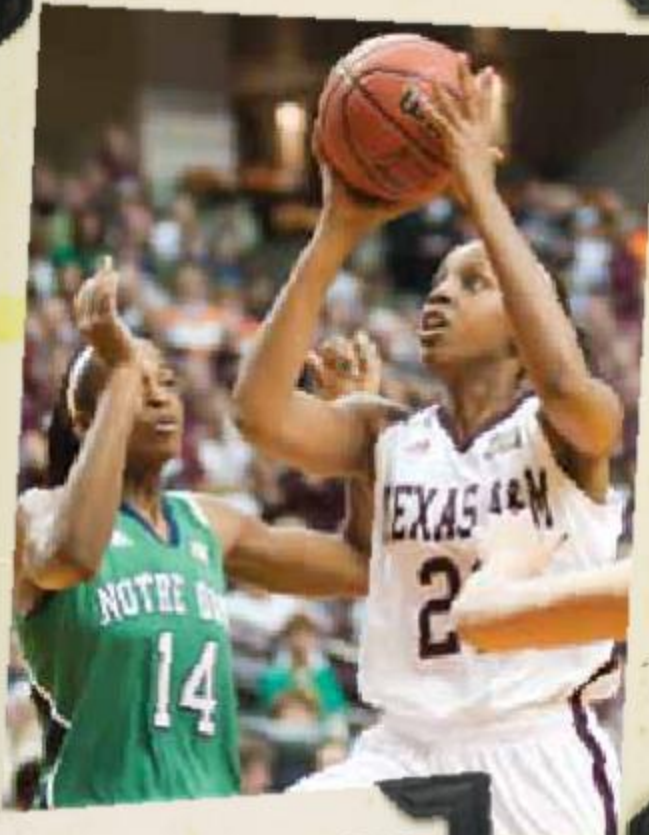
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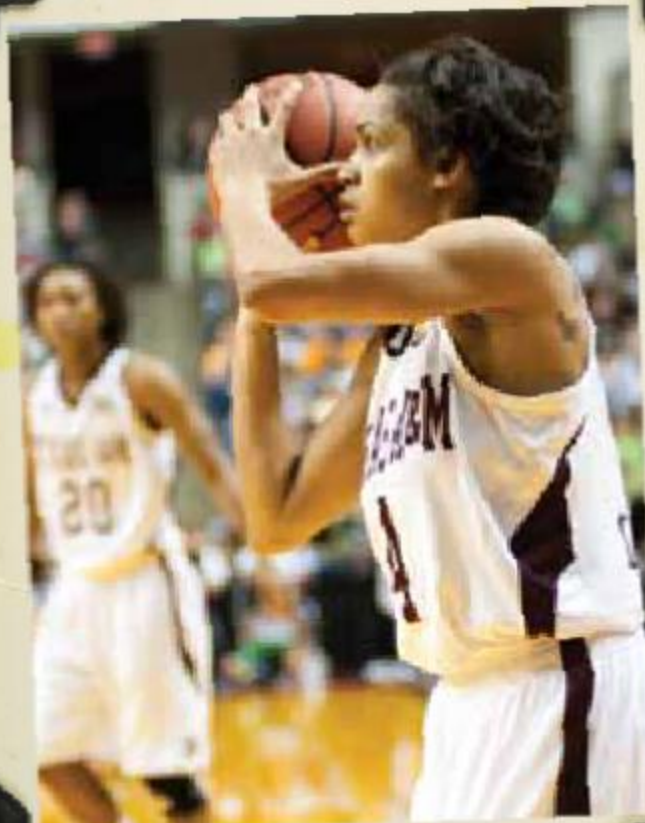
INDIANAPOLIS, IN

FINAL FOUR (APRIL 3): TEXAS A&M 63, STANFORD 62

One program was playing in its first-ever Final Four, the other its fourth in a row. From the national perspective, Texas A&M was a nice story, but the stage was set for a Stanford and Connecticut rematch for the national title. When Stanford extended its lead to 54-44 with 6 minutes left in the game, many watchers – including the TV broadcast crew – had already moved the Cardinal over on their brackets. The Aggies, however, had other thoughts. Texas A&M's smothering defense held Stanford to only two more baskets the rest of the game, and the Aggie offense started to rally, finishing on a 19-8 run. The unbelievable comeback culminated with three lead changes in a frantic last 19 seconds. After Stanford regained the lead with 9 seconds left, Sydney Colson drove the length of the floor and dished to Tyra White for the game-winning layup.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP (APRIL 5): TEXAS A&M 76, NOTRE DAME 70

On the biggest stage, the first All-American in program history put the team on her back and carried Texas A&M to its first national championship. Danielle Adams was simply dominant, scoring 22 of her 30 points after halftime in a thrilling 76-70 victory over Notre Dame in front of a pro-Irish crowd. Tyra White – the silent assassin – added 18 points, including an amazing 3-pointer off an inbounds play as the shot clock expired to put the Aggies up by 5 with a minute left. At that point it was clear that the night belonged to the Aggies. **AT**





Aggieland ROAD TRIP

COLLEGE STATION > INDIANAPOLIS

3,143 miles by air, 330 miles by car, 19 hours, 4 states

It's not every day that Texas A&M plays in a national championship, but up until the very last minute, it didn't look like AI was going to make it to Indianapolis for the women's Final Four. Jason was stuck in San Francisco for work while Jeremy Ksionda '04 and I were trying to determine if we could pull the trip off. Fortunately, we found a way to Indy to witness history in the making. Here are a few highlights from our adventure...

LAST MINUTE FLIGHT

Until this trip, I had never purchased plane tickets less than 24 hours from my flight before. Turns out that's not the best time to get a great itinerary. We started with a 2 a.m. drive from Aggieland to San Antonio to catch our 6 a.m. flight to Indianapolis by way of Baltimore. Yes, Baltimore. We made a return stop in Chicago on the way back, which made a little more sense. All in all, we flew 3,143 miles and spent around 13 hours in planes and airports.

BLOWING OVER BALTIMORE

I have this little problem with motion sickness. I typically don't do well in the backseat of a car and I tend to shy away from carnival rides. As for airplanes, only once *had* my little problem caused an unfortunate event. While in Las Vegas for my brother Alan's 21st birthday (I was 16), my family decided to jump aboard an eight-seat plane to fly over the Grand Canyon. I felt horrible from takeoff and, putting it delicately, I eventually blew over the Grand Canyon. I still have the replacement T-shirt to prove it. So does my other brother, Ward, who held it together until he turned back to watch me toss my cookies at 10,000 feet. Now that you know where this is going... Jeremy and I fully intended to sleep on our first leg to Baltimore,

but we were either too tired, too excited or both. After we spent most of the ride watching *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* for the 50th time, I started feeling bad from the lack of sleep. The uneasy feeling was compounded by a turbulent plane, whose pilot was either in the early stages of the training program, or he was trying to dodge asteroids as he circled the airport. The pilot claimed there was a hole in the runway that delayed our landing, so maybe he was just bored from flying around in circles. It took everything I had to hold back my breakfast kolaches. Finally, we started our descent. I nearly lost it several times on the way down. Jeremy frantically found a ziplock bag in his backpack that I clutched in my hands. Minutes later, we were finally on the ground and taxiing to the gate. I was home free, or so I thought. I needed off this plane in a bad way. When my favorite pilot announced that we had to wait a few more minutes on someone to open the door at the gate, I started feeling even worse. Then, I lost it. Again and again and again. You know how some people tend to stand in the aisle waiting to get off the plane? Well, I feel sorry for the people who decided to stand in the aisle next to me. I feel sorry for the stewardess who so politely asked if my ziplock bag was trash as we finally exited the plane. And most of all, I feel sorry for Jeremy who had to suffer through the entire unfortunate event in the seat next to me. What made the whole thing worse? An hour later we had another flight to catch.

SLEEP IS OVERRATED

The long journey and lack of sleep was completely worth it when that final buzzer sounded and the green, gold and blue confetti began raining down on the National Champion Aggie women's basketball team. What a great championship for the most deserving bunch of players and coaches I can think of. **AI**



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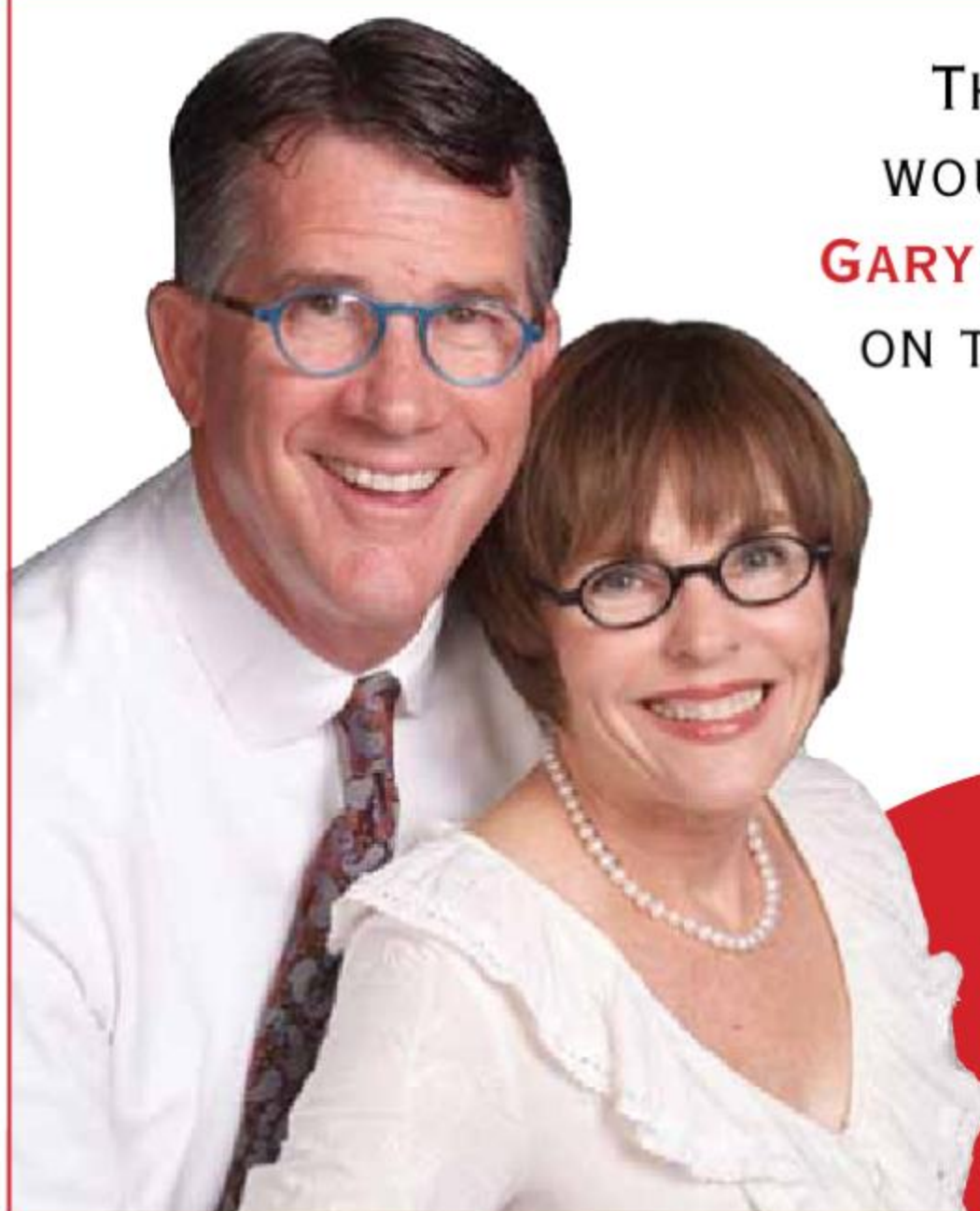
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Where were you when the Aggies won the championship?

"I watched the game at Buffalo Wild Wings in College Station, which was packed with Aggies united to support the girls. The whole restaurant sang the War Hymn, cheered every basket and erupted in emotion when the game was over. Maybe I screamed too loud during the game because my tonsils suffered for the next week, but it was all worth it. It was quite an experience I will never forget. Congratulations to the Women's basketball program!"

— MACY SAVAGE '12, AI MARKETING INTERN & SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

Where were you when the Aggies won the championship?

"We all hope to see something great happen in our lifetimes, to experience those moments that thrill us. Watching the Aggie women win the national championship was one of those moments for me."

— KATIE MCCONNELL '09, AI COPY EDITOR EXTRAORDINAIRE



Where were you when the Aggies won the championship?

"My wife and I watched the game in our living room while our kids watched in a different room. We were about 30 seconds behind on our DVR. When the game ended, our kids started screaming and ran into the living room to see our reactions. It was crazy! We haven't jumped around celebrating like that since Sirr Parker scored the winning touchdown in the Big 12 Championship game. Way to go Aggies!"

— ROB HAVENS '88, AI ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER



Where were you when the Aggies won the championship?

"I was in a position that every Aggie fan would envy – on press row at Consecro Fieldhouse, just a few short feet away from all the action. I pulled out my iPhone as Danielle Adams shot two free throws that, despite being irrelevant to the outcome, seemed to seal the moment where Aggies everywhere knew the unthinkable had happened. I recorded my surroundings in hopes of being able to share with others the out-of-body experience that was taking place all around me. I recorded the green, gold and blue confetti falling from the ceiling, the NCAA officials handing out the championship shirts and hats to our beloved Ags, and Sydney Colson's acknowledgement of the Aggie faithful in attendance, sharing her exuberance. I recorded the championship trophy being presented to Gary Blair from just behind the rope that separated the team from all the photographers trying to get the perfect shot. And best of all, I stood just below the nets that the coaches, players and staff ceremoniously cut down to keep as a memento of an experience that none of us will ever forget. Yes, I had a chance to experience the most meaningful moment in Aggie sports history in my lifetime from a perspective that any Aggie would kill for, and I consider myself one of the luckiest guys around for having a chance to do so."

— JEREMY KSIONDA '04, AI MANAGING EDITOR



Where were YOU when the Aggies won the championship?

Email editor@aggiemag.com and tell us your story. Or mail a note to Aggiland Illustrated, PO Box 6841, Bryan, TX 77805. Who knows – your story might end up printed in the next issue.

See more photos from the national championship!

Visit www.aggilandillustrated.com to view our full photo gallery from the national championship game.

Where were you when the Aggies won the championship?

I followed the team to Shreveport and Dallas, but a conference for my full-time job kept me from going to the Final Four. Stuck in San Francisco until the day of the championship, I couldn't find a flight that would get me to Indy in time for the game. I was, however, able to get an earlier flight home with the hopes of being able to catch the game on TV. As I walked in the door, the players were being introduced prior to tip-off. Sharing the historic game and subsequent celebration with my wife, Katie, was truly memorable. I was also the only AI staffer able to catch the team the next day when they returned to a packed house at Reed Arena for the welcome home celebration. Thanks for the memories, Ags!"

— JASON MCCONNELL '01, AI ASSOCIATE EDITOR/PHOTO EDITOR

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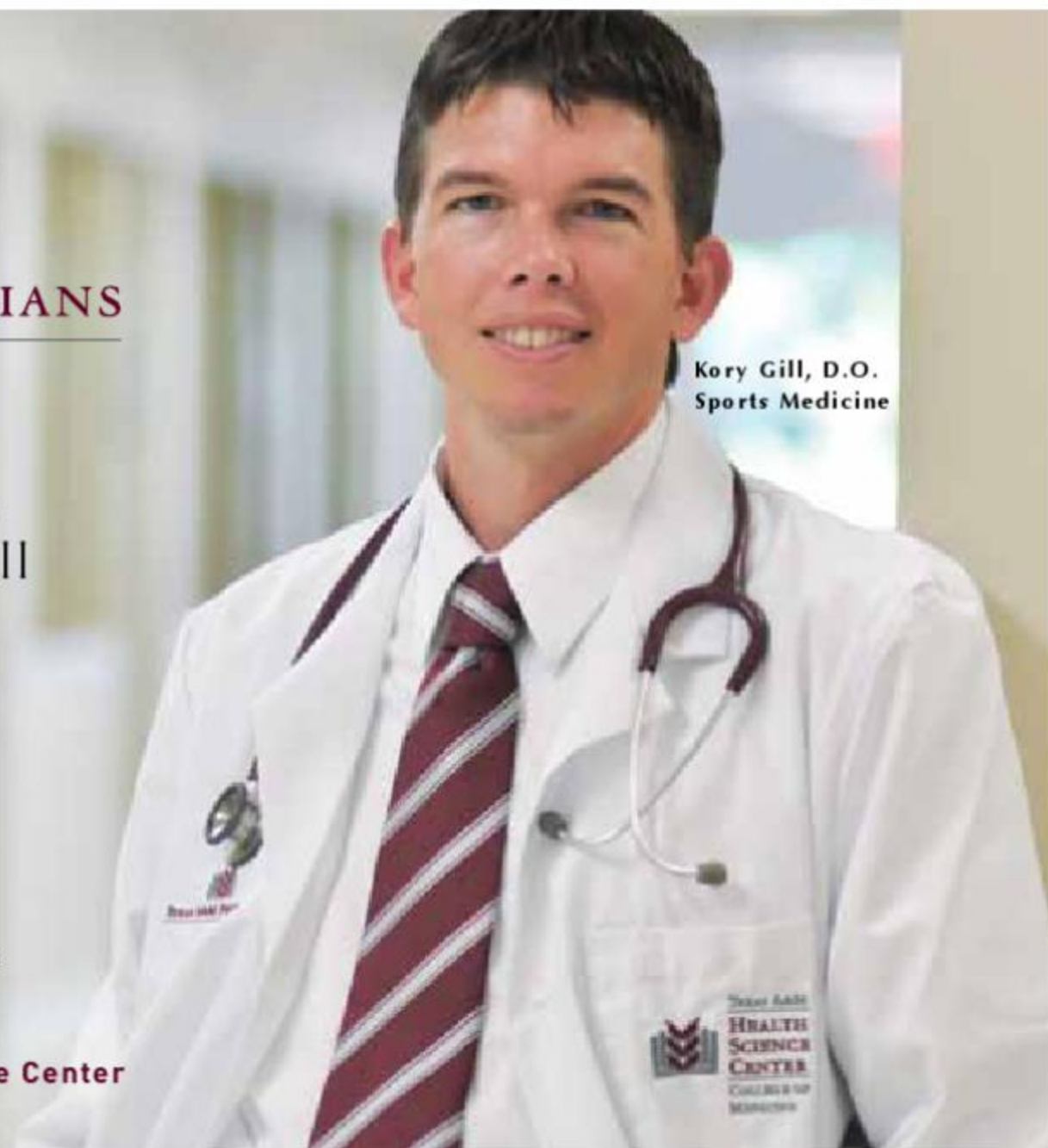
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THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SENIOR CATCHERS KEVIN GONZALEZ AND GREGG ALCAZAR

BY MINDY MAGEE '12

Favorite Olsen tradition...

KG: The train, just because everybody gets so excited when they get the number right.

GA: Ball four, ball five, ball six... because it can have a big effect on the game.

Favorite baseball movie...

KG: Bull Durham.

GA: A tie between Major League and Bull Durham.

Favorite pitcher to catch for...

KG: John Stilson or Michael Wacha. They both throw hard, but I find it easier to catch when pitchers throw hard.

GA: Wacha. He hits the spots and makes it much easier on us.

Do you ever shake off Coach Childress' calls?

KG: We don't, but the pitchers do. If it was up to us, we would probably call the games ourselves.

You don't have that option?

KG: No, not unless we're up by like 40 runs.

Favorite Aggie baseball moment...

KG: Winning the Big 12 Tournament last year when Brodie Greene hit the walk-off home run.

GA: That has been the top one for me so far.

Game-winning hit or a game-winning play at the plate...

GA: Game winning hit. There's nothing like getting a game winning hit.

KG: It depends on what kind of hit it is. If it's a little bleeder...

Do you take it personally if someone steals?

KG: Yes, but I think that's the best part about catching – trying to get the runner when he's stealing.

GA: If it's on me, yes.

Funniest guy in the clubhouse...

KG: Josh Cohen, our trainer. That's without a doubt.

What makes him funny?

KG: He's a clown. He's a 12-year-old trapped in a 30-year-old's body.

GA: He's comfortable with saying and doing whatever. He keeps us loose.

Best place you've played baseball outside of Olsen...

KG: Summer ball during my freshman year in college when I went to play in the Northwoods League. The smallest crowd was about 3,000, so it was like being right back at home. It's like



kevin
GONZALEZ

playing in a big tournament.

GA: The best atmosphere that I've played in was the JUCO World Series in Grand Junction, Colorado. The people there wait year around for that, so it's pretty awesome how everyone reacts when the players get there.

Superstitions or pre-game rituals...

KG: I don't shave or shower before a game because when I grew up, my dad always told me it took away the power. I break that sometimes because I like looking clean every once in a while.

GA: I don't step on a foul ball line or on any chalk line. I always make sure to step over it. If it's in the course of the game it doesn't bother me, but if I know I do it, then it bothers me.

What do you say to calm a pitcher down?

GA: Just tell him to relax and get after the zone. A lot of times it seems like pitchers are just tight and that's a lot of the reason that they're not finding the strike zone.

KG: It depends if they are scared or if they are not around the zone. That's when you really get on to them. But if not, I just go out there and tell them "hey, you're trying to throw too hard. You're trying to do too much. Just let them hit the ball. We have got such a great defense that they're going to make outs. I know you want to strike out here and there, but I'll take anything to get the ball to our shortstop and get them out over there."

GA: It also depends on the pitcher you're dealing with. If they're younger, it's a little pat on the butt and getting a little fire underneath them, and if it's a guy who is experienced, you have got to go out there, calm him down and just get him zoned in.

KG: Stilson is not one who you'd go out there and try to calm down. He feeds off of adrenaline. He's that kind that you have to go in there and just try to get his adrenaline up.

What do you talk to the umpires about?

KG: More than 90 percent of it doesn't even have to do with baseball.

GA: You definitely have to sweet talk them a little bit. You want them to feel comfortable with you.

KG: Being here for 5 years, it feels like most of them are like my coaches. They are a bunch of good guys. If you have fun with them, it's the best. If you have fun with them and goof around, then they're more likely to help you out with an extra pitch when you come up to bat.

GA: And if they're comfortable with you, it makes it easier to question a call late in a game without it coming out of left field.

Walk-up song...

KG: Mine is a Spanish song by Daddy Yankee and the reason I chose it is because everybody was choosing country and rap and I wanted to bring a little Latin flavor out here to Aggieland.

GA: Mine is a song by Wiz Khalifa. I just picked it because I like it.

Uniform number...

KG: When I first tried out for little league I made the team and they asked me what number I wanted. I was a third baseman before I started catching so I loved Chipper Jones. My sister was with me and she loved him as well and had his pictures all in her room. So she asked, "Why don't you choose No. 10?" And I thought, yeah, that's a good number.

And I have stuck with it ever since. Someday I'm going to have to retire that number.

GA: I was No. 21 until I got to A&M. A close family friend of mine who played football back home was 21. Growing up, I always knew him and I got stuck on 21. When I got here somebody else had it, so I took the closest thing to it - 2. **AI**



gregg
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THINGS WE LEARNED FROM SPRING FOOTBALL

BY JEREMY KSIONDA '04

Preparing for one of the program's most highly anticipated seasons in recent history, the Texas Aggie football team had a solid spring camp that featured a noticeable increase of speed and physicality all over the field. Here are ten things we learned from spring football 2011...

THE D-LINE IS GOING TO BE STOUT

It's hard to believe a position that was nearly depleted before Mike Sherman arrived has suddenly transformed into such a position of strength. Tony Jerod-Eddie looked like a man on a mission this spring, and is poised to have the type of senior campaign that will send him shooting up NFL draft boards this time next year. Starters Jerod-Eddie, Eddie Brown and Jonathan Mathis look like men among boys, and a bevy of promising young talent behind them are sure to make them earn their keep. Kirby Ennis, Ben Bass, Stephen Barrera, Ivan Robinson and Gavin Stansbury all showed marked improvement this spring, and the Ags will only get better with the arrival of big LaMarc Strahan this fall.

THE O-LINE IS GOING TO BE STOUT TOO

Not to sound like a broken record, but it truly is hard to believe a position that was nearly depleted before Mike Sherman arrived has suddenly transformed into a position of strength. The Ags



have found themselves in a position that every football program would kill for (especially our friends in Austin). Even when the second team would take the field, the Aggies looked like a team that was physically ready to manhandle whatever or whoever was in front of them. The search for Matt Allen's replacement wasn't found until the end of spring when Patrick Lewis, a two-year starter at guard and the most experience lineman among the group, mastered his new role.

C-MIKE IS BACK

We have to preface this by saying that Cyrus Gray looked like the senior leader and captain that we knew he would be this spring, toting the rock with a purpose and physically transforming his body into a chiseled specimen. But any questions surrounding the health of Christine Michael and the broken leg he suffered at the end of last season were officially answered this spring. Even with a slight gimp, C-Mike looked like he never missed a beat out there. It's safe to assume that Gray will be the featured back this fall after his outstanding performance during the second half of the 2010 season, but a re-born Michael will not wait quietly in the wings.

THE BACKUP QB RACE CONTINUES

In our last issue, one of our burning questions for this spring was to find a suitable backup for Ryan Tannehill next fall. None of the other quarterbacks on the roster – redshirt freshmen Jameill Showers and Matt Joeckel, as well as true freshman Johnny Manziel – have ever taken a live snap at the collegiate level. That's a scary thought, considering any of them is only "one play away" from taking over the reigns full time. While none of the young guns emerged as the unquestionable backup, each brought their own strengths to the table. Joeckel probably has the best grasp on the offense. Showers has the biggest arm on campus (by a





pretty wide margin). And Manziel just has the “it” factor when the lights come on. The verdict is still out on this battle.

MORE DEPTH NEEDED IN THE SECONDARY

There’s no question that the Aggies are much deeper across the board, but with Steven Campbell, Coryell Judie, Terrence Frederick and Lionel Smith all having to sit out spring drills due to injury, it was obvious that the Ags still have some filling of the roster to do in the defensive secondary. On a positive note, however, some of the younger players got a chance to prove their worth, such as Toney Hurd, Jr., who was moved back to his natural position at corner after being forced into action as a safety last season. Although he gave up nearly half a foot to Jeff Fuller, Hurd constantly challenged the Al-Big 12 receiver and gave him fits at the line of scrimmage with his physical style of play.

THE PUNTER JOB REMAINS WIDE OPEN

Unfortunately, whatever questions the Aggies had at punter this spring remained unanswered, as the inconsistency that plagued the maroon and white last fall spilled over into the month of April. As best as we could tell, the starting nod is still up for grabs, and incoming freshman Drew Kaser will undoubtedly have every chance to pick up the starting role as soon as he steps on campus.

THERE ARE OPTIONS AT INSIDE LINEBACKER

In the Cotton Bowl, it was evident when Michael Hodges went down that the Aggies would have a lot of searching to do this spring to find a suitable replacement for the All-Big 12 linebacker. There’s good news and bad news. First the bad: No one seemed to emerge as the odds-on favorite to land the starting role. Now the good: A lot of young players showed promise throughout the spring. True freshman Donnie Baggs, a midterm graduate, was arguably the most pleasant surprise all spring, arriving with the physical prowess of an upperclassman and a nose for the football that great linebackers are born with.

NO JOB IS SECURE

When Von Miller was getting a spell on the sidelines last season, a promising true freshman, Damontre Moore, would take the field in place of the Aggie All-American. Moore, a long, raw prospect that hadn’t played hardly a down of varsity football

when Sherman discovered him, went on to rack up sacks, forced fumbles and tackle for loss statistics that most could only dream of. This spring, however, the coaches challenged him on a daily basis in order to fill the void left by Miller and transform Moore into the same type of All-American that they know he can become. At times, Moore would find himself down the depth chart and having to re-earn his starting role. The rest of the team took notice, and Moore will undoubtedly remember the lesson come fall.

THE DESOTO FACTOR IS STILL IN EFFECT

When the Aggies signed Von Miller, Cyrus Gray, Tony Jerod-Eddie and Garrick Williams out of DeSoto high school just a few years ago, they knew they had some special prospects on their hands. What they probably didn’t know, however, was that those four prospects, teammates and best friends would go on to transform the squad from cellar dwellers of the Big 12 to South Division Champions as well as legitimate conference and national title contenders during their tenure in Aggieland. A special group of players that share a very special bond, the “DeSoto effect” will live on in infamy among the Aggie faithful, and will carry on in the Aggie locker room for years to come.

WE STILL LOVE VON MILLER

Just in case you weren’t aware, we’re pretty big fans of Von Miller. What a privilege it was to watch the talented but raw and sometimes seemingly uncoachable young pup transform into a polite, upstanding, team-first man. Above all, No. 40 possessed the kind of “will to win” that coaches dream of, and we’ll forever cherish the memories Miller provided. To see him come home to Aggieland for the spring game and sign countless autographs just weeks before he heard his name called at the 2011 NFL Draft was a bittersweet moment. We’re so happy for him, but boy will we miss him. **AV**



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#21 Steven Terrell
(JR-ZL)

#2 Steven Campbell
(JR-ZL)

X
FS

#30 Johniel Franklin
(JR-TR)

#1 Trent Hunter
(SR-3L)

X
SS

#36 Donnie Baggs
(FR-HS)

#8 Garrick Williams
(SR-3L)

X
ILB

#18 Kyle Mangan
(JR-ZL)

#11 Jonathan Stewart
(JR-ZL)

X
ILB

#9 Charlie Thomas
(SO-1L)

#10 Sean Porter
(JR-ZL)

X
OLB

#22 Dustin Harris
(JR-ZL)

#5 Coryell Judie
(SR-1L)

X
CB

#3 Lionel Smith
(SR-ZL)

#7 Terrence Frederick
(SR-3L)

X
CB

#24 Damontre Moore
(SO-1L)

#71 Caleb Russell
(JR-1L)

X
JOKER

#89 Ivan Robinson
(SO-1L)

#92 Jonathan Mathis
(SR-1L)

X
RDE

#42 Kirby Ennis
(SO-1L)

#19 Eddie Brown
(SR-3L)

X
NT

#90 Ben Bass
(SR-1L)

#83 Tony Jerod-Eddie
(SR-3L)

X
LDE

WR-X



#8 Jeff Fuller
(SR-3L)

#9 Nate Askew
(SO-1L)

WR-Y



#25 Ryan Swope
(JR-ZL)

#5 Kenric McNeal
(JR-ZL)

LT



#76 Luke Joeckel
(SO-1L)

#63 Cedric Ogbuehi
(FR-RS)

LG



#71 Brian Thomas
(JR-1L)

#51 Jarvis Harrison
(FR-RS)

C



#61 Patrick Lewis
(JR-ZL)

#74 Danny Baker
(SR-7)

RG



#63 Evan Eike
(SR-3L)

#77 Shep Klinka
(SO-1L)

RT



#75 Jake Matthews
(SO-1L)

#73 Rhontae Scales
(SO-1L)

TE



#87 Nehemiah Hicks
(SO-1L)

#80 Hutson Prioleau
(SO-1L)

WR-Z



#7 Uzoma Nwachukwu
(JR-ZL)

#4 Brandal Jackson
(JR-ZL)

RB



#32 Cyrus Gray
(SR-3L)

#33 Christine Michael
(JR-ZL)

QB



#17 Ryan Tannehill
(SR-3L)

#16 Matt Joeckel
(FR-RS)

#3 Jameill Showers
(FR-RS)

FB



#19 Michael Lamothe
(JR-ZL)

#44 Andrew Wolridge
(JR-1L)

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Randy Jordan – Running Backs
Troy Walters – Wide Receivers
Jim Turner – Offensive Line

SPECIAL TEAMS

K

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(SR-3L)

#31 Kyle Serres
(SO-SQ)

P

#26 Ken Wood
(SR-ZL)

#48 Ryan Epperson
(JR-ZL)

PR

#5 Kenric McNeal
(JR-ZL)

#22 Dustin Harris
(JR-ZL)

KR

#5 Coryell Judie
(SR-1L)

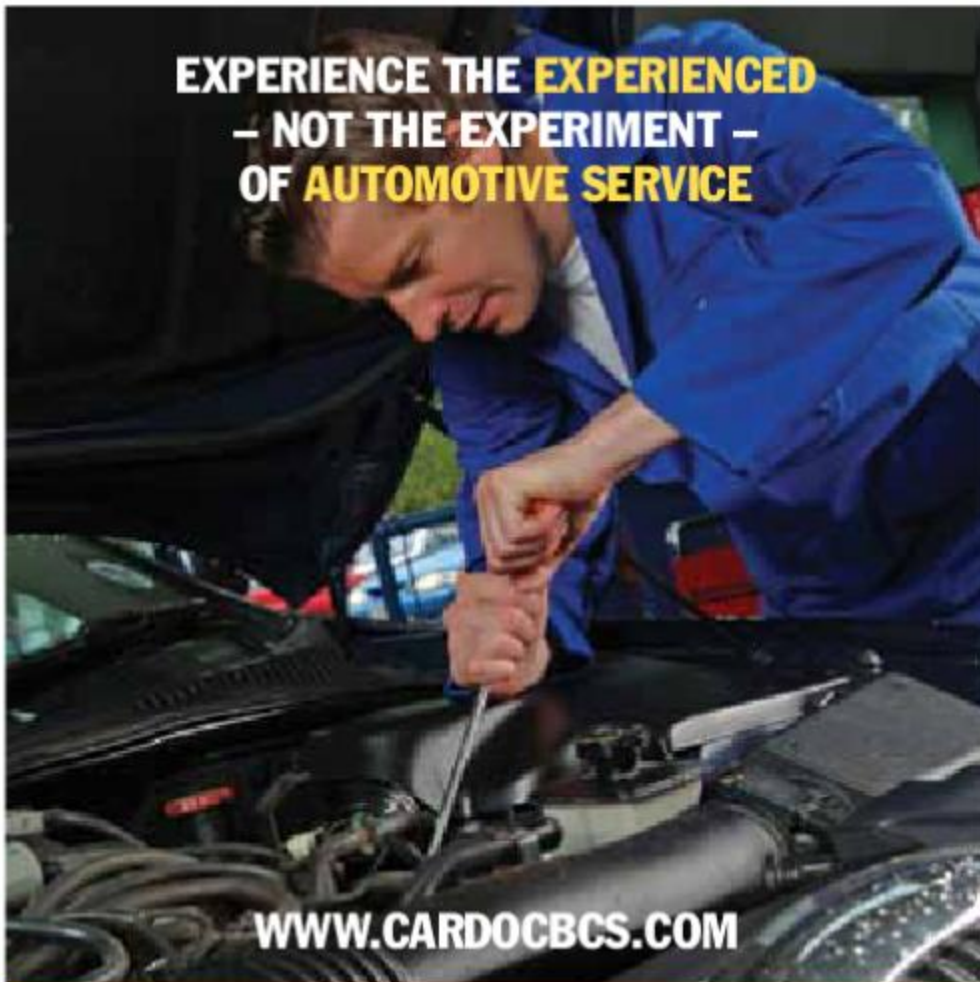
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the 12th man



(above) Jeff Fuller (left) and Von Miller (right) sign autographs for lucky fans. Fuller's decision to follow in Miller's footsteps and return to A&M for his senior season remains the most important development in the football program since last season ended. (left) Nathan Walkup sings the Aggie War Hymn with his parents following A&M's victory over Texas Tech on senior day. The leadership and toughness of the outgoing senior class will be difficult for Mark Turgeon to replace. (inset) Third grader Ty Polzin's winning drawing in the first AI Junior Aggie Club Drawing Contest. Congratulations Ty! (below) The Texas Aggie Dance Team (left) and the Junior Aggie Wranglers (right) entertain fans at Reed Arena. (bottom) Young Aggies sing the War Hymn after the Maroon & White Game.



Aggieland

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A line drawing of three football players. The player in the center is wearing a jersey with the number 40 and the name 'Miller'. The player on the left is wearing a jersey with the number 78 and the name 'Texas'. The player on the right is wearing a jersey with the number 7 and the name 'Texas'.

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BY KELSEY KEENE '12 AND BRIAN DAVIS '01

WOMEN'S RUGBY

They come from Missouri, Maryland, Texas, Virginia and even Mexico. They have different majors, are from different high schools, and come from different backgrounds. But they all have two things in common – their friendship and their love for the sport of rugby.

Rugby is not one of the highest profile sports in the United States. In fact, very few high schools sponsor a rugby program. However, each member of the Texas A&M Women's Rugby Club was drawn to the sport after arriving in College Station, and with this unique sport they found something that each of them is passionate about.

Just two of the club's 24 girls played rugby in high school. Fifteen are allowed on the field during a game. There are 8 forwards numbered 1-8 who primarily defend their territory and form the scrum – a frequent occurrence in a rugby match when both teams come together and are pushing against one another to contest for the ball. The forwards are equivalent to linemen in football. The rest of the players are the backs, and like running backs in football, are the faster players primarily responsible for moving the ball forward and scoring. However, unlike American football, all 15 players are allowed to touch the ball during the game.

One thing that each player stresses during a game is the importance of teamwork. Everyone pulls a certain amount of weight and, because there are no timeouts, they must be able to effectively communicate while on the field.

The club has traveled far and wide to play, from California and Colorado to Georgia and Florida. However, their favorite destination was an eight-day ad-

venture to England over spring break in 2010. Even though it was raining and they had to play in mud that clung to their cleats for weeks to come, the experience was something they will never forget.

Typically the top rugby club in Texas, the Aggies have had tremendous success regionally and nationally over the years. In 2010, they qualified for the National Round of 16 after winning the Western Rugby Football Union D1 championship. Their 2011 season ended with two disappointing losses at the West playoffs in Norman, OK in March.

Their success can be attributed to focusing on the keys of a good rugby team – fitness, knowing your teammates and communicating effectively with them. Every member of the team takes pride in being a part of the family that is the Texas A&M Women's Rugby Club.

GYMNASTICS

Following in the footsteps of the Aggie women's basketball program, the Texas A&M Gymnastics Club brought another national championship home to Aggieland this spring. Competing against 50 schools at the 2011 NAIGC National Championships in Richmond, VA, the men won first and the women finished second in team competitions. The Aggies also won several individual titles in a field of more than 500 competitors.

National championships are nothing new to A&M gymnastics. The women's team claimed the title from 2007-2010, while the men had been on the verge of making it to the top until winning this year. One of the oldest clubs in Texas A&M's history, it has also been one of the most successful.

While only 25 went to nationals, more

than 50 students are active members of the club. Some are new to gymnastics and join as something to do for recreation, while others have been involved for much of their lives and are in it to compete – and win. For the latter like senior club president Constance Cuadra '11, that takes sacrifice and a great deal of commitment to be successful.

"Most of us are in the gym at least three hours every night," she said. "And a lot of our members balance gymnastics with really hard majors. We have a ton of engineers in the club, but everyone takes care of their schoolwork."

The club is a part of the Texas Gymnastics Conference and competes in five or six big meets a year, typically on the campuses of the larger schools in the state, including one in Aggieland at the Student Recreation Center. The girls compete in vault, balance beam, uneven bars and floor exercise, while the men compete in rings, pommel horse, high bars and parallel bars in addition to vault and floor exercise.

Like Cuadra, Eli Richardson is one of the top performers on the team. In addition to leading the men's team to the title this year, the junior industrial engineering major has won the men's all-around individual competition at nationals for three years in a row.

For Richardson and Cuadra, the experience of being a part of the club is one they will never forget.

"We're all really good friends – inside and outside of the gym," Cuadra said. "Being a part of the club is like joining a network for life. Our former players come back for all of our meets. I'm so glad I joined."

Visit recsports.tamu.edu for more information about the Women's Rugby Club or the Gymnastics Club. 



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HOME SWEET HOME

BY KATIE MCCONNELL '09



We all have that place where we go to unwind, catch up with friends or cram for the next exam. A place for business meetings, book clubs and job interviews. Places that have become so familiar to us that they provide a level of comfort similar to your favorite cup of coffee.

In Aggieland, Sweet Eugene's House of Java is that special place for many local patrons who love its eclectic style, delicious treats and genuine people. Fittingly, the idea for opening a place loved by so many Aggies was first hatched by Aaron Brown '91 and his brother, Matthew, while Aaron was in school at Texas A&M.

"I did a business plan for class over a coffee shop, not really thinking that anything would ever come from it, only that it caught my interest," Brown said.

Although he never expected to be a well-loved coffee shop owner, Brown soon found himself sitting down with his brother to discuss introducing Bryan/College Station to a great coffee shop – something that was unknown to the area at the time. In 1993, Sweet Eugene's served its first cup of Joe, and began its legacy.

Although local patrons affectionately refer to it as "Sweet's," not many people realize where the name actually comes from. In fact, many customers may be surprised to find out that there isn't really a "Eugene."

"We were throwing around ideas for names one day when we remembered a friend who had been nicknamed 'Sweet Eugene,'" Brown recalled. "The nickname came from someone mispronouncing his real name, so after that Eugene just stuck. It also was the best fit for our store, and we knew we wanted to avoid using the word 'coffee' in the name since it had been done so much."

Three years after opening its doors, Sweet Eugene's got its own coffee roaster, propelling the evolution of the business that

has provided Aggieland with some of its favorite natural coffee blends.

Not a traditional coffee drinker? That's not a problem at Sweet's where, like the name implies, there are plenty of sweet and unique specialty drinks (I highly recommend the White Chocolate Raspberry Truffle). And, if you're hungry, as a customer of Sweet Eugene's you will go away happy *and* full with a wide variety of doughnuts, sandwiches and crêpes (for breakfast, dessert or lunch).


"Our crêpes usually surprise people," Brown said. "They don't expect to be able to get one for lunch, too, but they're good."

Although the coffee shop has changed over the years, it maintains its core values – supply customers with exceptional service, quality and community. Brown considers the process truly evolutionary.

"When we started there weren't cell phones or laptops, so it was a lot quieter," he recalled. "We used to have a line of people waiting to use the pay phone, but in recent years we've had to install extra outlets for laptop power cords."

In a town stemmed from tradition, Sweet's customers have some all their own. Whether you get your favorite drink every time you're there, make a point of dropping by while in town or always sit at your favorite table by the window, Sweet's has become a tradition in a traditional town.

"I just love the fact that we live in a town with a school that bases itself in tradition," Brown said.

There are certain things that comfort us, make us happy and provide a sense of relief when life becomes overwhelming. Sometimes that is found in a familiar face, a good conversation or even a warm cup of coffee. When you walk into the doors of Sweet Eugene's, you will find everything you need laced through the hum of the coffee roaster and chatter of content customers. It feels just like home sweet home. 

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GLEN'S GREAT EIGHT

6. Big Day for Big John, 1989

John Byington hit two ninth-inning home runs to beat the Longhorns twice in a 1989 doubleheader, leading the Aggies to the Southwest Conference Championship. "This was one of my favorite shots from a memorable day." – Glen Johnson

In each issue of Volume 5 of AI, we are excited to share eight of Glen Johnson's most memorable moments from photographing all things Aggie. Glen has been the official photographer of Texas A&M Athletics since 1981. Special thanks to Glen for his contribution.

PHOTO BY GLEN JOHNSON



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